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ABSTRACT

Knowledge management (KM) has traditionally been well positioned within corporations. What has been less certain is how to use the information retained by KM practices to improve employee performance. Researchers are investigating how KM data/objects can be fused with e-learning practices to produce meaningful, effective, performance-enhancing solutions. The topic was also selected as the discussion of an innovative session at the 2000 Academy of Human Resource Development conference. The session objectives were as follows: (1) enumerate the components of KM; (2) describe factors influencing the merger of KM and e-learning (technologies, human nature, organizational culture); (3) evaluate the benefits and limitations of e-learning and KM; and (4) establish a community of learners interested in the integration of e-learning and KM. The following were among the 11 specific issues selected for discussion by the session panelists: (1) the current state of e-learning; (2) the factors that have traditionally played the largest role in deployment/utilization of KM systems; (3) ways culture (national, professional, organizational) influences KM; (4) barriers to merging e-learning and KM; (5) the extent to which technology impacts the adoption of systems in organizations; and (6) the research questions that must be addressed to realize the concept of an integrated e-learning/KM system. (MN)

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2002 AHRD Conference

Innovative Session 3

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Honolulu, Hawaii

February 27 - March 3, 2002

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Fusion of E-Learning & Knowledge Management

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Traditionally knowledge management (KM) has been well position within corporations (Barron, 2000). What has been less certain is how to use the information retained by KM practices to improve employee performance. Researchers are investigating how KM data/objects can be fused with e-Learning practices to produce meaningful, effective, performance enhancing solutions. This panel will discuss the current states of the e-learning and knowledge management fields, factors potentially influencing the merging e-Learning and KM, future research avenues, and visions of the future.

Keywords: E-Learning, Knowledge Management, Systems/Application Design

"In an economy where the only certainty is uncertainty, the one sure source of lasting competitive advantage is knowledge" (Harvard Business Review, 1998). It is the only renewable resource that an organization can capture, manipulate, and create to its advantage (Huseman and Goodman, 1999). Yet, knowledge is an elusive asset (Watkins, 1999); it is continually at play within organizations and in individuals. How is knowledge created? How is it stored? How is it lost? These are all issues of central concern to knowledge management. They also are the same issues of concern to learners and educators. With the growing usage of technology in and for learning, they are becoming the issues of concern for system designers and software engineers.

Ausubel (1968) in his classic work, *Educational Psychology: A Cognitive View,* wrote how important it was to make learning meaningful to the learner. In traditional classroom environments, this meant integrating curricula across disciplines. In e-Learning environments, this means utilizing a knowledge base containing a collection of objects that have emerged out of real life problems and situations and which have direct application to the learner's job. It is this notion of integrating meaningful content, extracted from organizational knowledge bases, into organizational training environments that prompted early proponents of e-Learning / knowledge management mergers to begin exploring the idea of using an integrated approach. "In a mature e-Learning and KM implementation, knowledge workers will tap the same knowledge well for targeted e-Learning, unstructured information, in-house experts, and outside resources" (Barron, 2000).

This session presents the opportunity to initiate and continue a focused discussion on the fusion of e-Learning and knowledge management practices. The panelists participating in this session represent researchers, practitioners, and software system designers involved in the fields of e-Learning and knowledge management. They will begin this on-going discussion by sharing their findings and experiences during this session and then discussion will be continued in a learning community that will emerge from the session itself.

Session Objectives

Dialogue will be directed by the session Chair. In addition, each of the five panelist will promote discussion further by soliciting input and sharing of ideas of unique interest to themselves and the group as a whole. During the discussion, attention will be directed towards, existing research, potential barriers and benefits to merging e-Learning and knowledge management practices, and establishing a practical research model. As a result of these discussions, this session hopes to achieve the following objectives:

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Analyze the current state of e-Learning

- Enumerate components of knowledge management
- Describe factors influencing merger (technologies, human nature, organizational culture)
- Evaluate benefits/limitations of merging e-Learning and knowledge management
- Establish community of learners interested in the integration of e-Learning and knowledge management

Session Content

As recommended in the request for proposals, the session will be very flexible with specific topics being dictated by the audience members themselves. Listed below are a few of the topics and questions expected to arise during the session. Bear in mind, these items are simply guidelines for the expected flow of the session. Discussions will not be limited to these areas and will flow and adapt as the audience dictates.

- Given the research in the field, how would you describe the current state of e-Learning?
- What aspects of e-Learning have progressed furthest in the last three years?
- What aspects do you foresee progressing the most in the next three to five years?
- There is a lot of differing opinions as to what constitutes knowledge management; how do you view it?
- What factors traditionally have played the largest role in the deployment/utilization of knowledge management systems?
- How does culture (national, profession, or organizational) influence knowledge management?
- What benefits, if any, might an organization receive by merging e-Learning and knowledge management?
- What barriers traditionally have prevented the merging of e-Learning and knowledge management?
- To what degree does technology impact the adoption of systems (e-Learning or knowledge management) in organizations?
- What are some possible approaches/models that might be employed in merging e-Learning and knowledge management?
- What questions or research must be addressed in order to realize the concept of an integrated e-Learning/knowledge management system?

In addition to panelist addressing these questions, audience members will be solicited to share their insights and experiences with e-Learning and knowledge management. In doing so, we seek to attain a higher level of engagement with the audience thereby making the activity more meaningful and directly applicable to their personal and professional pursuits.

Outputs

Two primary outputs will emerge from this session. First, audio and summary transcripts of the session will be produced and made available online. Second, a learning community will be formed of researchers and practitioners interested in the integration of e-Learning and knowledge management; details follow.

Audio and Summary Transcript.

A facilitator will record noteworthy comments, questions, and ideas on a flip chart with a summation of the notes being provided online at the Knowledge and Learning Systems Group's web site <http://learning.ncsa.uiuc.edu/>. In addition, attempts will be made to capture conversations from the session for production of a streamed audio recording to accompany the written summary transcript. The resulting two learning objects will be housed in the KLSG's online repository for access by the general public and by members of the e-Learning/knowledge management learning community described in the following paragraph.

Learning Community

Establishment of an online learning community serves to not only continue sharing the experiences and acquisition of new information pertaining to e-Learning and knowledge management by its members but also will serve as a mechanism for participation in the development and testing of new learning and information management

systems currently under development at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications on the University of Illinois campus.

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